



# Thinking Like a Gig Worker:

A Public Opinion Case Study on  
Gig Workers and the Gig Economy

Union Opinion Project June 2020

# Why it matters to think like a gig worker.

- Think of gig workers as a potentially large, untapped “market” of new members in your union.
- Seven in 10 gig workers believe they should be allowed to join unions.
- A large majority of Canadians and gig workers say online job platforms like Uber should provide gig workers with workplace benefits.
- Your own members want gig workers organized. A majority of union members throughout the country believe gig workers should be allowed to form unions.
- People who work gig jobs believe in the future most workers will be gig workers.
- Think about packaging information, experience and know-how your union has already into a benefit for gig workers (newsletters, an “ask a union expert” live chat, a helpdesk for temps, a safety and health hotline).
- Think about a website where gig workers confidentially can reach an organizer, talk with members who feel engaged in your union, and sign a membership card with an electronic signature.

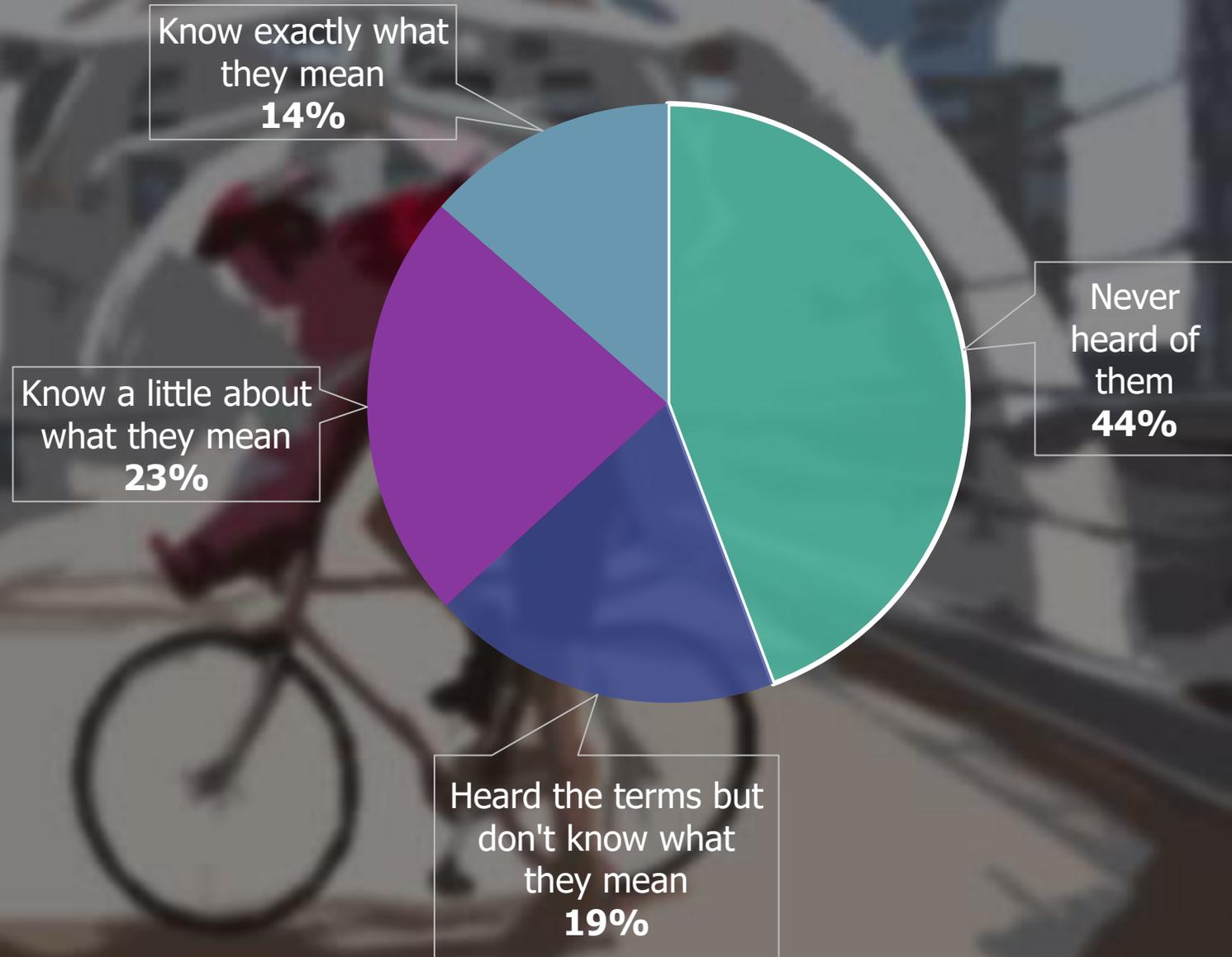


# Familiarity with the Gig Economy

**Do not call them “gig workers.”**

**Most Canadians don't know what the terms gig work or the gig economy refer to.**

## How familiar are you with the terms gig worker and gig economy?

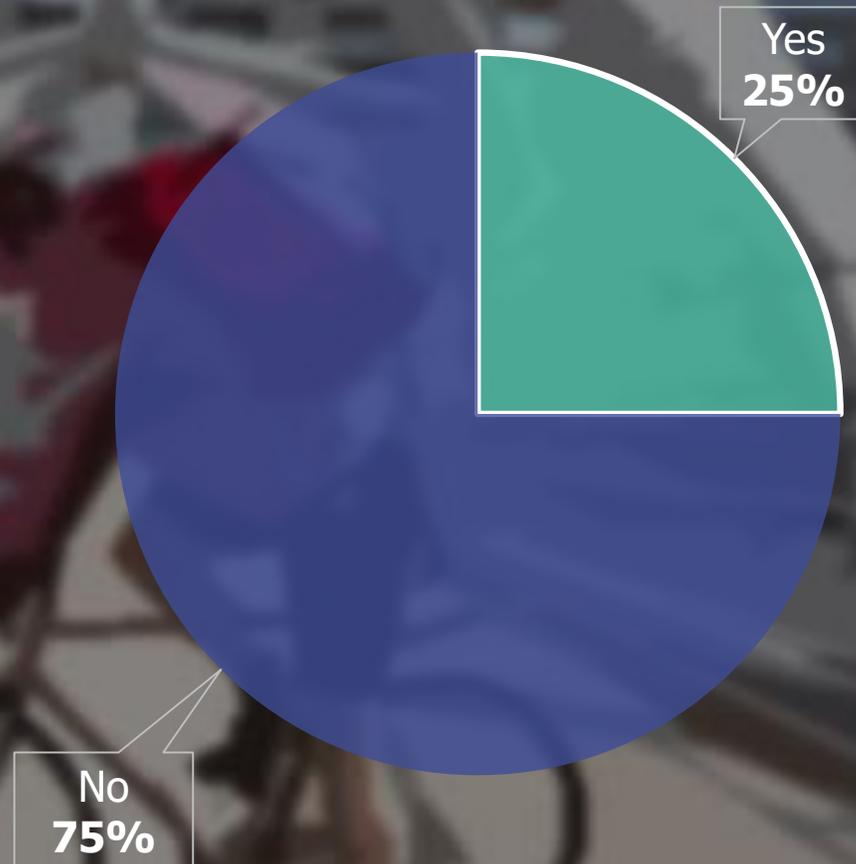


A person wearing a red jacket and black shorts is riding a bicycle on a city street. They have a large red delivery bag attached to the back of the bike. The background shows a blurred cityscape with buildings and a street sign. The text "Profile of a Gig Worker" is overlaid in white on the right side of the image.

# Profile of a Gig Worker

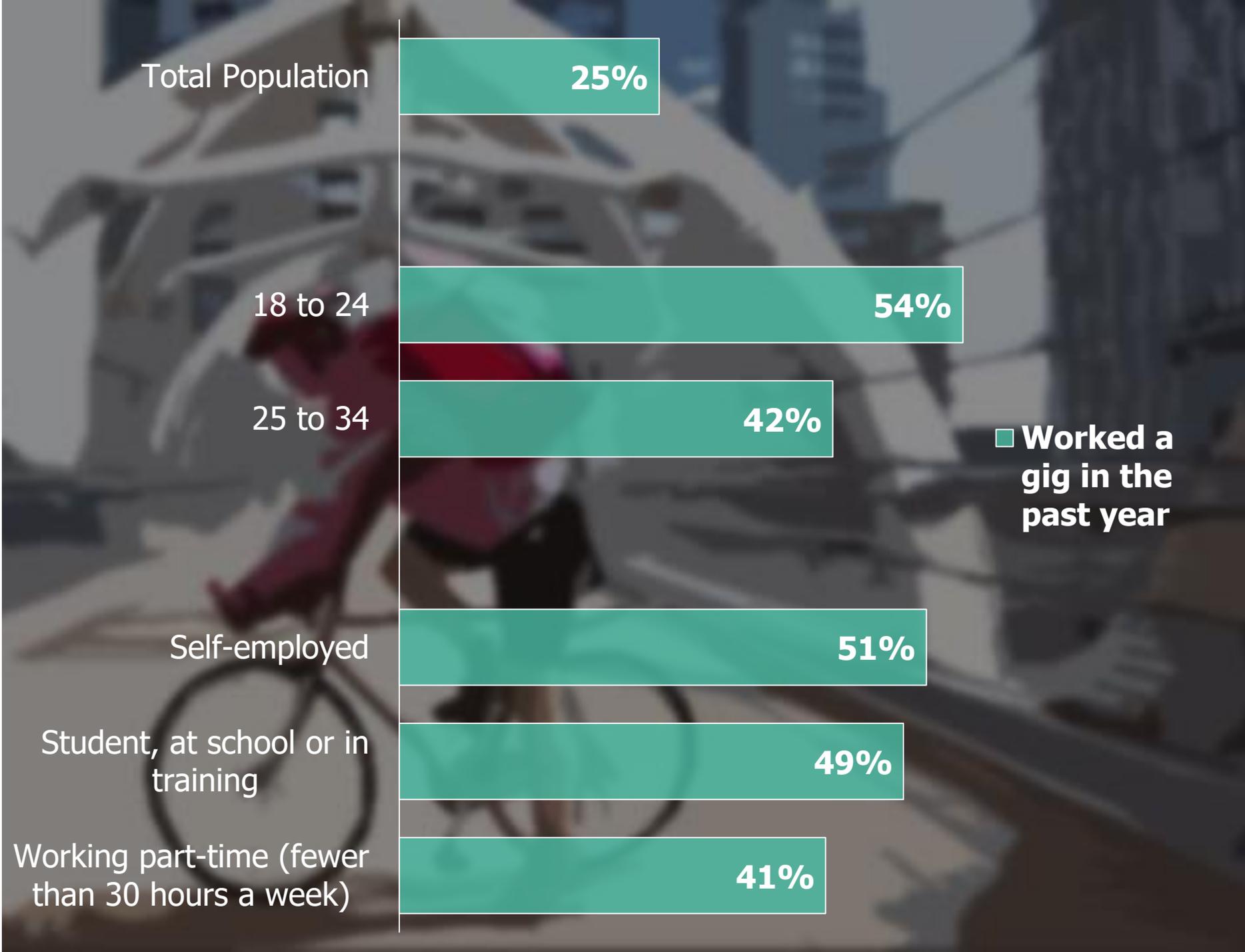
**In the past year, that is in 2019, did you earn money doing any short-term, temporary, part-time or one-off projects or jobs for different employers?**

**One in four Canadians have worked in the gig economy in the past year.**



**Gig workers are more likely to be:**

- **Under the age of 35**
- **Students or in training programs**
- **Working part-time**
- **Self-employed**

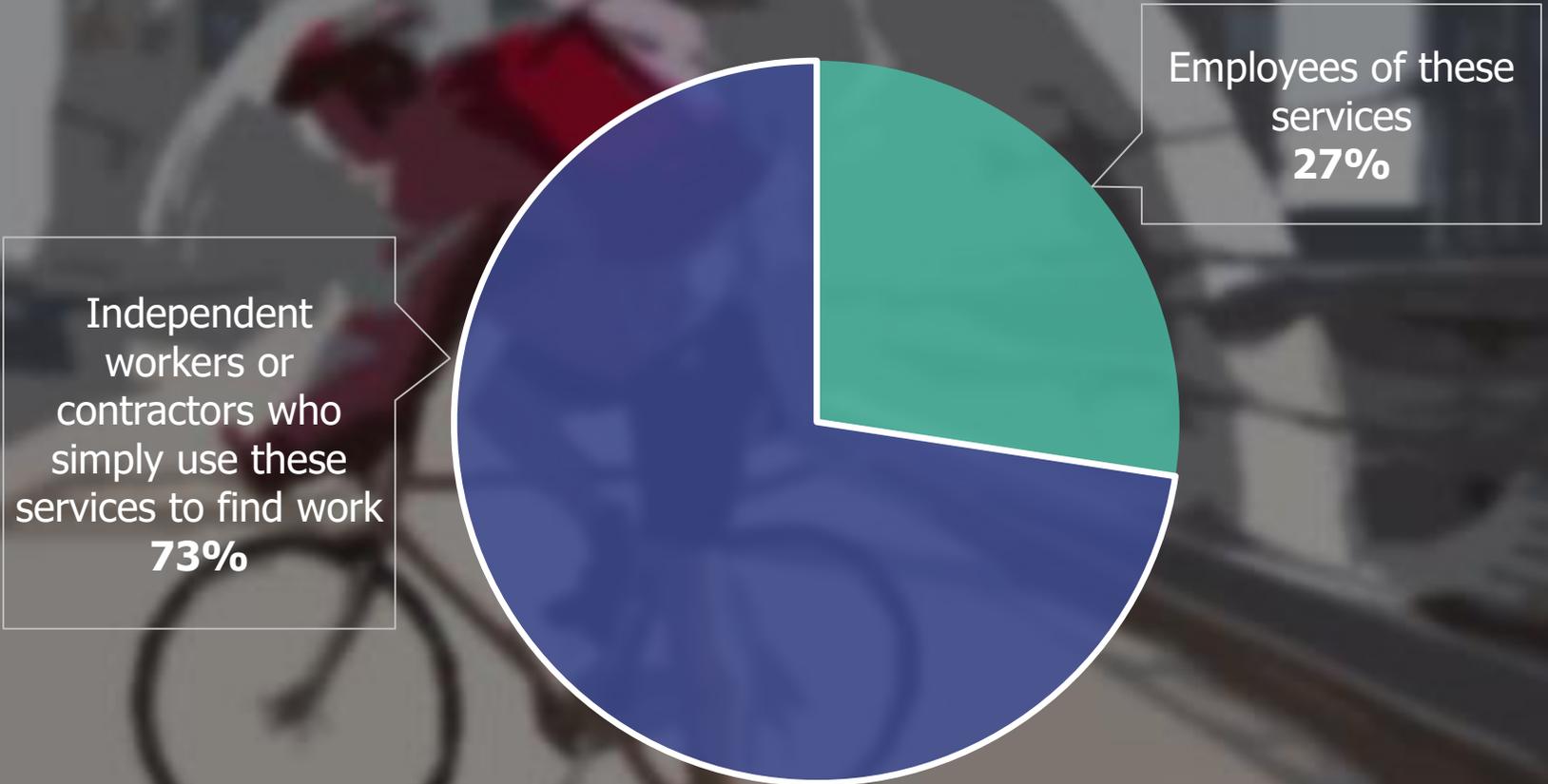




# Are Gig Workers Employees or Independent Contractors?

Usually gig workers use their own equipment, set their own schedules and don't receive an hourly wage or salary. For example, gig workers drive for a ride-hailing service like Uber or connect directly with people who want to hire them on a website run by a job service or using an app on a smartphone.

Do you think of gig workers more as...?

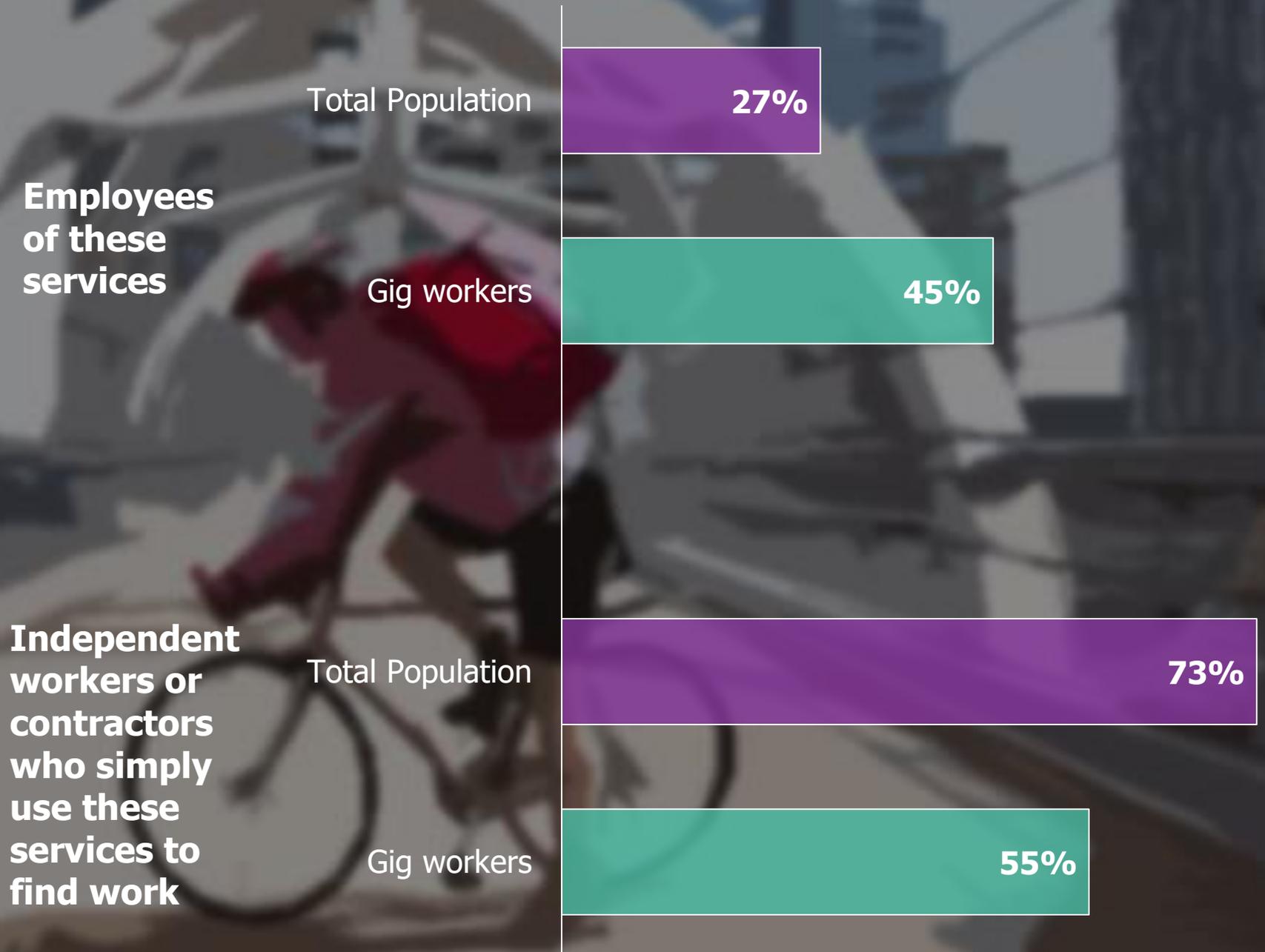


**Canadians have the wrong image of gig workers and think they have clients, not bosses.**

**Although most gig workers see themselves as independent contractors, almost half see themselves as employees.**

**That's why so many gig employees want unions.**

Do you think of gig workers more as...?



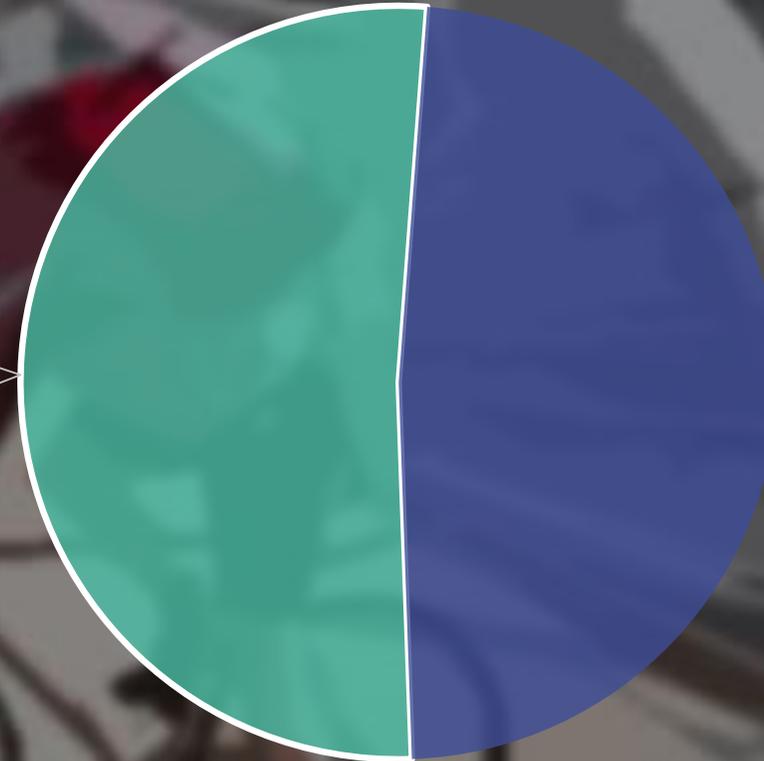


# Gig Workers Unite?

**Do you think gig workers should or should not be allowed to form unions, bargain collectively and negotiate contracts covering pay and working conditions with services like Uber?**

**Organizing gig workers is easier with public support.**

**A majority of Canadians believe gig workers should be allowed to form unions.**



Yes, should be allowed to form unions  
**52%**

No, should not be allowed to form unions  
**48%**

**Gig workers are more likely than other people to believe gig workers should be allowed to unionize.**

**Nearly 4 in 10 gig workers say they would vote for a union in a labour-board-supervised secret ballot (*The Vector Poll™, 2017*)**

## Should gig workers be allowed to form unions?

**Yes, should be allowed to form unions**

Total Population

52%

Gig workers

70%

**No, should not be allowed to form unions**

Total Population

48%

Gig workers

30%

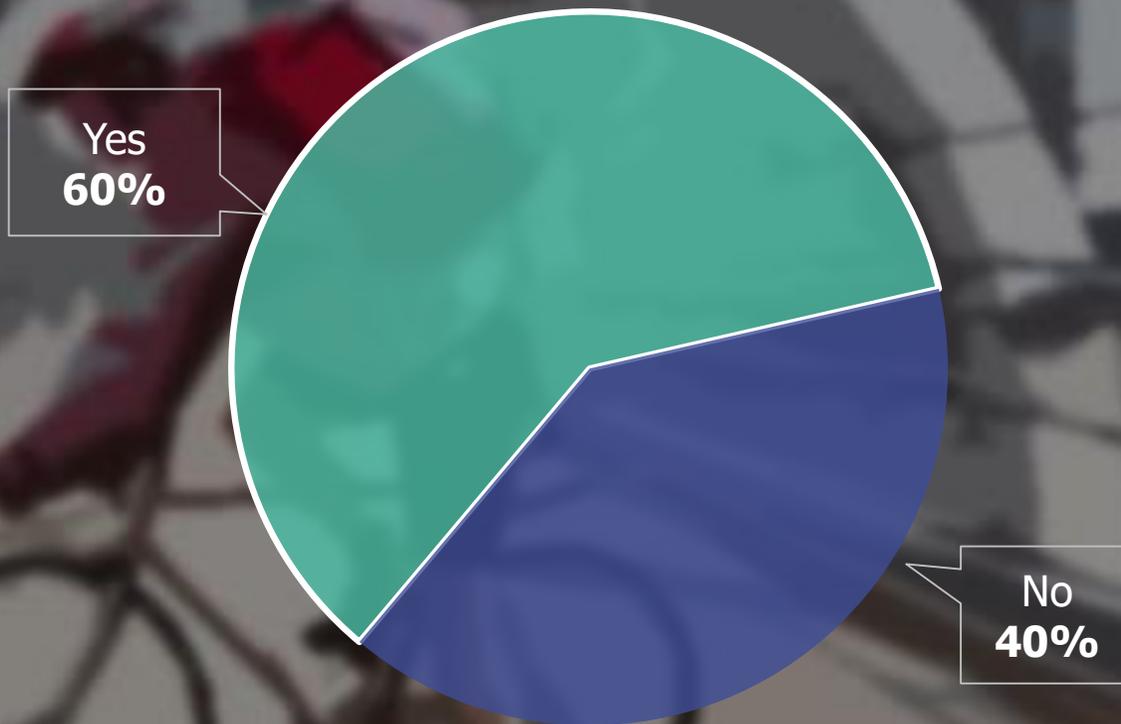


# Gig Workers and Benefits

**Do you think companies like Uber should be required to provide gig workers who use these services with benefits such as medical insurance, sick leave, paid vacations, retirement plans and workers' compensation, or not?**

**The public sympathizes with gig workers against gig employers.**

**A majority of Canadians believe companies running job platforms should provide benefits to gig workers**



# Should companies provide benefits to gig workers?

**Yes, should be required to provide benefits**

Total Population

60%

Gig workers

76%

**No, should not be required to provide benefits**

Total Population

40%

Gig workers

24%

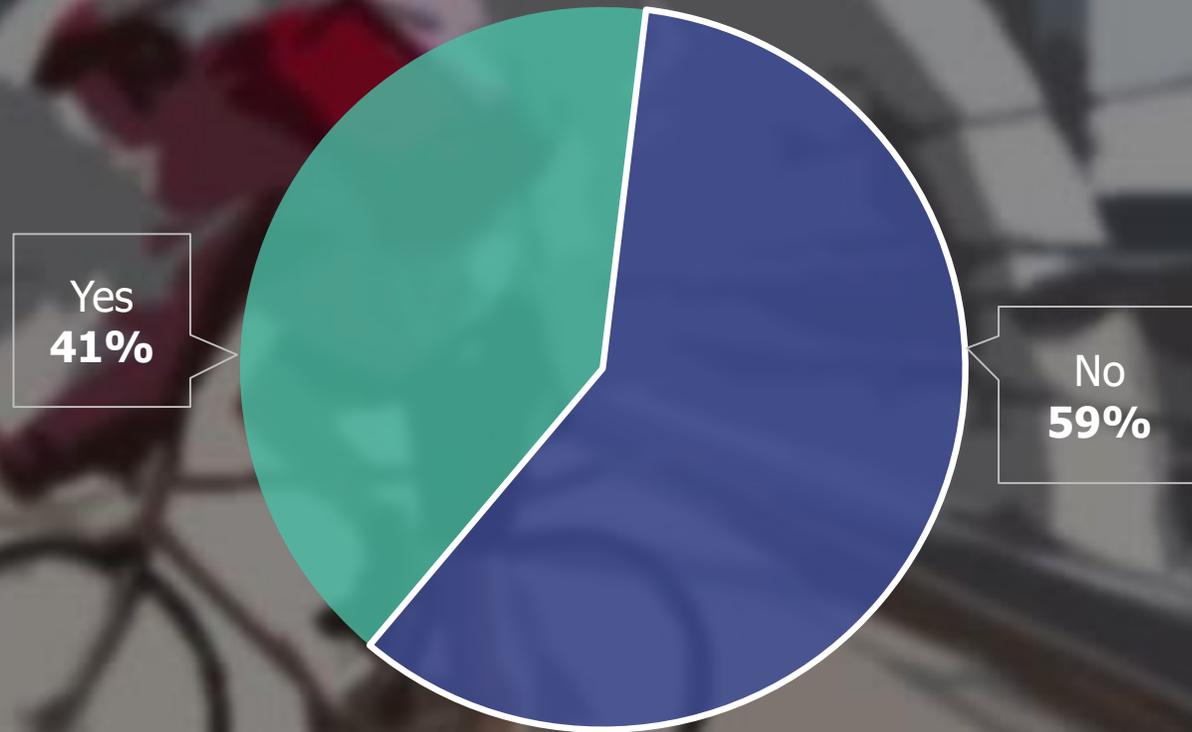
**No matter how they think of themselves – employees or independent workers – gig workers say job platforms should provide benefits for gig workers.**



# Future of the Gig Economy

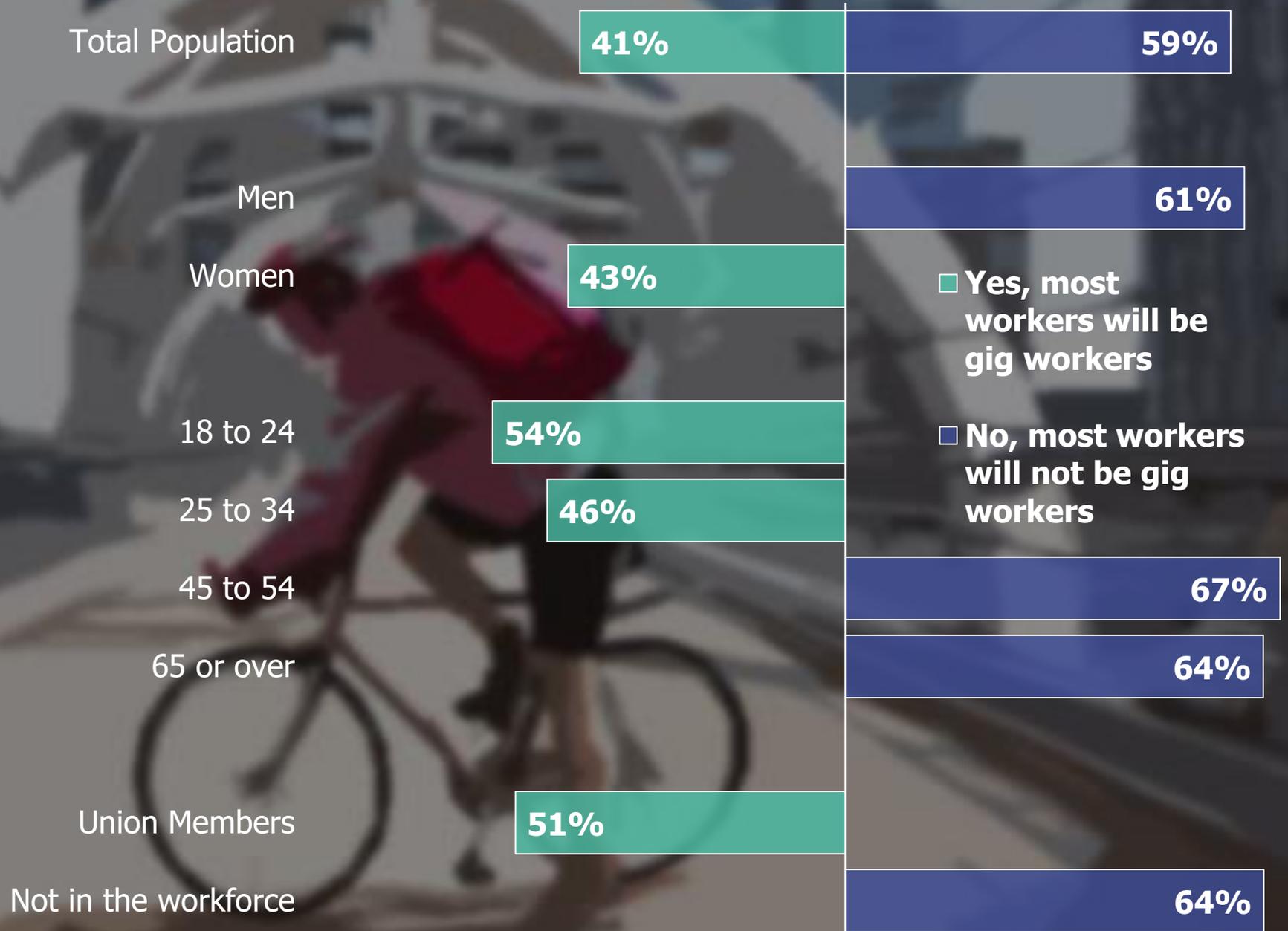
Looking ahead, 10 or 15 years from now, do you think most working people in this country will be gig workers, or not?

**Canadians think gig work is going to be a big part of the economy of the future.**



**You will be seen doing the right thing by organizing gig workers because young Canadians and union members are more likely to expect gig work will be significant in the economy of the future.**

## Future of the gig economy



**Most people doing gig work today believe the future of work will revolve around the gig economy.**

## Future of the gig economy

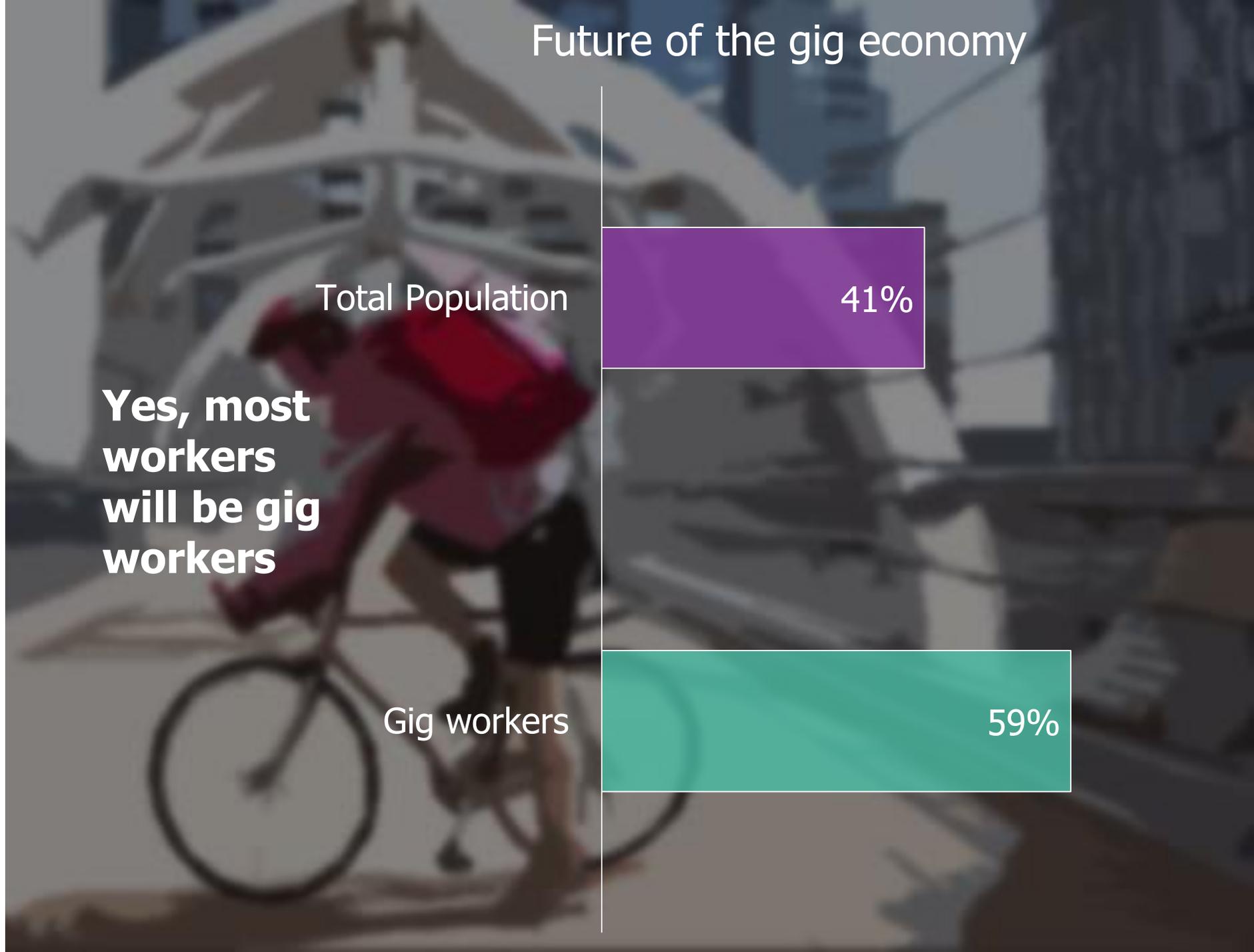
**Yes, most workers will be gig workers**

Total Population

41%

Gig workers

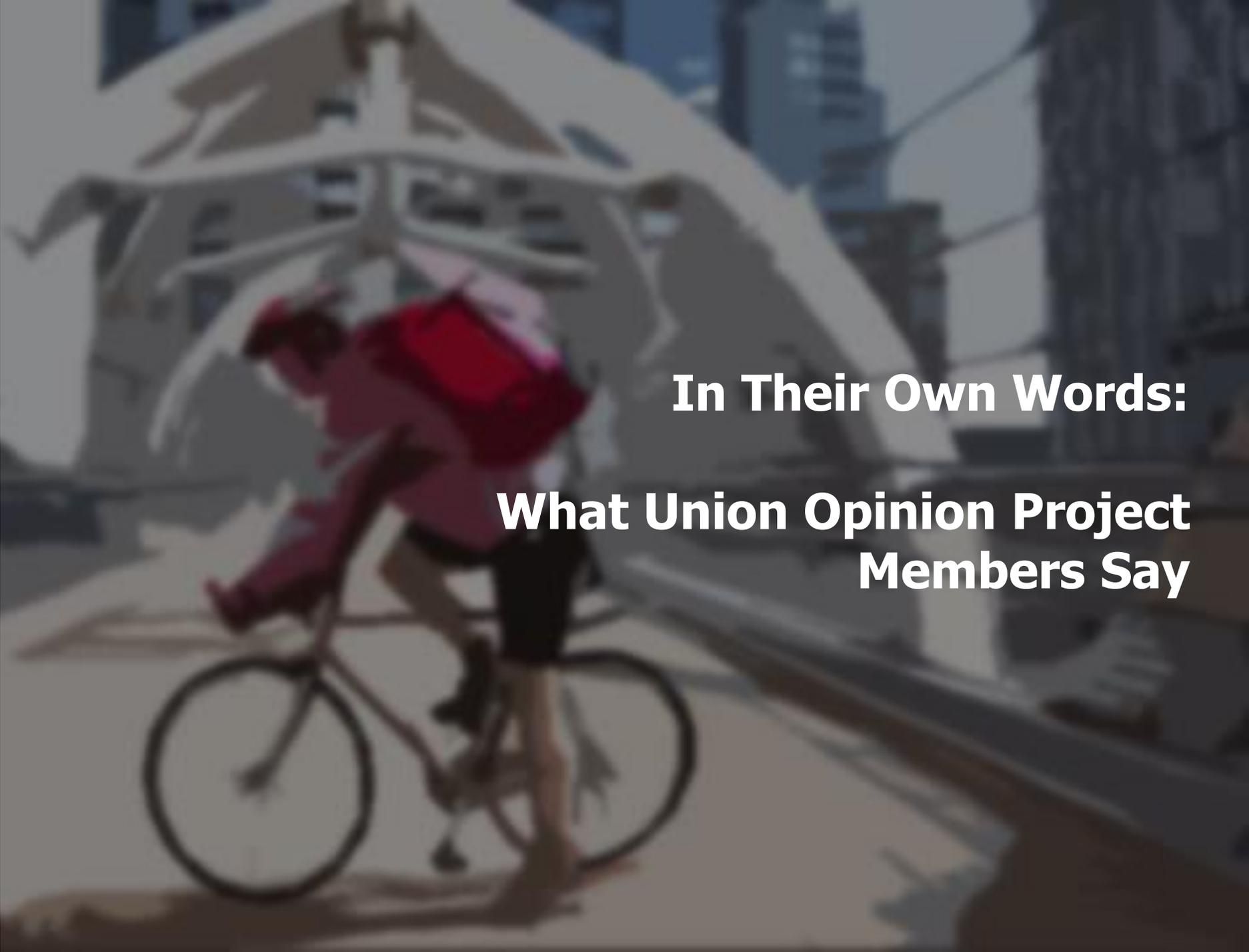
59%





# Methodology

- **Online survey from a demographically representative panel of Canadians.**
- **N=1,100 adults (aged 18 and older) throughout the country.**
- **Survey conducted in English and French.**
- **Vector Research weighted the data in each region of the country to match the known demographic profile of the population in the census.**
- **Fieldwork April 17 through 25, 2020.**
- **With a pure probability sample of 1,100 one could say with 95% confidence that the overall results have a sampling error of plus or minus 2.9 percentage points where opinion is evenly divided.**



**In Their Own Words:**

**What Union Opinion Project Members Say**



*"The United Steelworkers is proud to be a long-standing participant in the Union Opinion Project. We're able to field custom polling questions on timely topics relevant to our union's specific issues.*

*Marc and his team distill the results into valuable insights that inform our union staff and leadership. With the project's years of field research, we have access to an impressive back catalogue of results to give added context to the questions of today."*

Kim Hume  
Representative, Communications and Political Action  
United Steelworkers National Office

Bob Gallagher  
Department Head, Communications and Political Action  
United Steelworkers National Office



*"The Union Opinion Project helps OSSTF/FEESO communicate with policy makers, the public and our members with greater confidence and clarity.*

*With the project's union-focused insights and ideas, we see new opportunities to improve public education and engage our members in the union."*

Gary Fenn  
Director, Communications/Political Action  
Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation



*"ETFO's participation in the Union Opinion Project has provided us with a valuable opportunity to work with other unions while conducting public opinion research.*

*Working with unions from various sectors provides us with additional perspectives and allows a healthy exchange of strategies and best practices. This collaboration has helped ETFO increase the effectiveness of our campaigns."*

Federico Carvajal  
Executive Assistant, Communications and Political Action  
Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario

James Taylor  
Executive Assistant, Communications and Political Action  
Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario



The **Vector Poll**™  
Vector Research + Development Inc.

*"Vector polls alert ONA when voters change their views on health-care issues. ONA relies on the project's evidence-backed advice in advertising, government relations and organizing."*

*Working with different unions and getting different perspectives creates innovative, better ideas."*

Lawrence Walter  
Manager, Government Relations  
Ontario Nurses' Association



## CONTACT US

**Marc Zwelling, President**  
marc@vectorresearch.com  
416-733-2320

**Adrian Macaulay, Research Associate**  
adrian@vectorresearch.com  
647-539-7587